

Juan Estevan Reyna

December 26, 1878 — October 7, 1974

Juan Estevan Reyna was born in the state of Morelos, Mexico; received his early education in a private school in Cuernavaca, the capital of Morelos; and then spent three years in Denver, Colorado, in a Jesuit School, College of the Sacred Heart, later called St. Regis College. In 1893 he transferred for one year's work in the Ithaca High School, after which he spent three years in Sibley College at Cornell in electrical engineering. Then, because his father was interested in mining, he transferred in 1897 to Columbia School of Mines. Upon his father's death in October of that year, he changed back to electrical engineering and received the degree of E.E. from Columbia University in 1898, after which he returned to Ithaca and took a summer course in civil engineering. After a year in the engineering department of R. Hoe and Company, manufacturers of printing presses, he returned to Mexico to settle his father's estate, a sugar plantation of fifteen thousand acres, of which he became manager. In 1906 he was construction engineer of a canal eleven miles long, carrying 106 cubic feet of water per second to irrigate approximately five thousand acres of land planted in rice and sugarcane. This involved the design and construction of a dam across the river, the dam gates, the sluice gates, and twenty-two aqueducts.

In 1910 while Professor Reyna was visiting in Ithaca, political disturbances broke out in parts of Mexico; the state of Morelos was taken over by nongovernment forces; the large estates were overrun and financial return to the owners ceased. In 1912, being thus deprived of income, Professor Reyna accepted a position in the Department of Drawing at Cornell, under Professor W. C. Baker, to teach mechanical and perspective drawing, a connection that continued for seven years, when that work was transferred to the Department of Agricultural Engineering, where it has since remained. In 1921 the federal government in Mexico took over the Reyna plantation and divided the irrigated land into small parcels, which they distributed among the families of the neighboring towns, promising at the same time to reimburse the owners at a fraction of the fair value of the property. Because there appeared to be no hope of ever receiving this payment or recovering control of any of the property, Professor Reyna became a citizen of the United States. During World War II Professor Reyna spent six months in Washington as engineering consultant to the coordinator of the Inter-American Affairs Emergency Rehabilitation Division in preparing designs and drawings of improvements of simple implements and equipment to assist the less educated of the farming population of Latin America.

Professor Reyna was a master of his subject, being expert as a draftsman, a penman, and a scientific illustrator and in the special field of perspective drawing; as a teacher, while strict and demanding and always requiring accurate and correct work from his students, he was always sympathetic and cooperative with any young person who was desirous to learn, always ready to give special help where it was sought.

Professor Reyna was well known on the campus for his vigorous and skillful games of tennis and squash, which he played until his eightieth year. He developed an indoor tennislike game that he and his friends played frequently. His other interests included floriculture, the study of diet and vitamins, and the study of the archaeology of the Aztecs of his native country.

Professor Reyna retired on June 30, 1946, but was called back to teach for an additional year.

He attributed his long life to "clean living," lots of sleep and a good wife, who died several years ago. He stopped smoking at age seventy because it might interfere with his "wind."

He and Mrs. Reyna celebrated their golden wedding anniversary in 1947, marked by a special blessing bestowed upon them by Pope Pius XII.

He leaves a son, Leon C. of New York City, two daughters, Mrs. Phillip (Nenetzin) White of Mecklenburg and Mrs. Frederick (Nancy) Todd of Stamford, Connecticut, eight grandchildren, and twelve great grandchildren.

All who knew him will remember him as a very sociable, friendly person who liked company and enjoyed living.

O. C French, E. S. Shepardson